

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY DACCA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6739

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 2371

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, BG

SUBJECT: HOLIDAY EDITOR ARRESTED FOR "PREJUDICIAL ACTS"

1. ENEYETULLAH KHAN, EDITOR OF THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE WEEKLY HOLIDAY, WAS ARRESTED MORINING OF MAY 13 UNDER THE EMERGENCY POWERS RULES (EPR) FOR "PREJUDICIAL ACTIVITIES."

2. BRIEF LOCAL WIRE SERVICE ITEM ON ENEYETULLAH'S DETENTION DOES NOT DESCRIBE THE "PREJUDICIAL ACTIVITIES" AND IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THERE WILL BE ANY PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT SPECIFYING WHICH SECTION OF THE OMNIBUS EPR KHAN IS ALLEGED TO HAVE VIOLATED. GIVEN ALL-ENCOMPASSING NATURE OF EPR, PRACTICALLY ANY CRITICISM OF GOVERNMENT OR FOREIGN COUNTRIES MAKES ONE LIABLE TO A CHARGE OF COMMITTING A PREJUDICIAL ACT. IN ENEYETULLAH'S CASE, HE HAS BEEN INCREASINGLY FRANK IN HIS EDITORIALS AND IN ARTICLES PUBLISHED IN HIS NEWSPAPER, CRITICIZING PERFORMANCE OF THE GOVERNMENT AND ATTACKING INDIA, USSR, AND THE USA. THE MAY 11 EDITION OF HOLIDAY HAD SEVERAL STORIES THAT, SEPARATELY OR CUMULATIVELY, MAY HAVE LED TO HIS INCARCERATION. IN A SIGNED EDITORIAL ON COMMONWEALTH CONFERENCE, ENEYETULLAH WAS MOST LAUDATORY OF MUJIB'S PERFORMANCE BUT ENDED UP BY CONTRASTING FOREIGN SUCCESS WITH THE "DISMAL" INTERNAL PICTURE, TO WIT: "THE SUCCESS
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WITHOUT IS STRENGTHENING OUR BONDAGE WITHIN: AN AUTHORI-

TARIAN BONDAGE OF A FEW CORRUPT BUREAUCRATS, POLICEMEN AND MEMBERS OF THE RULING POLITICAL TRIBE." HE FURTHER SAID THAT "INTERNALLY THE PEOPLE DON'T EXIST. THEY ONLY EXIST FOR THE PURPOSE OF RHETORICS. WE SAY THIS BECAUSE IT IS PATRIOTIC TO SAY SO."

3. ALSO POSSIBLY A CONTRIBUTOR TO ENEYETULLAH'S PROBLEM WAS THE MAY 11 ARTICLE BY ATIQUL ALAM ENTITLED "CELEBRATING WITH TAILORED HISTORY," WHICH ATTACK THE DISTORTED SOVIET VIEW OF WORLD WAR TWO BEING PROPAGATED HERE IN THE CELEBRATIONS OF THE THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE "VICTORY OVER FASCISM." ANALYZING THE WEEK-LONG CELEBRATION OF V-E DAY, ALAM WROTE "... THE TARGET OF ATTACK SEEMED TO LIE SOMEWHERE ELSE. THE CENTRAL THEME OF IT WAS TO SAY THAT HITLER'S WAS JUST AN APOLOGY OF FASCISM; IT SHOULD REALY BE THE AMERICANS WHO WERE TO BE IN THE DOCK. SOUNDS AS IF THE GERMAN FUHRER WAS ONLY A SECOND OFFICER UNDER GENERAL EISENHOWER." USING UNACKNOWLEDGED DATA FROM A USIS PRESS RELEASE ON V-E DAY, ALAM WENT ON TO DESCRIBE THE EXTENT OF US AID TO RUSSIA DURING THE WAR, AND ALSO GAVE AN ACCOUNT OF THE SOVIET-NAZI NON-AGRESSION TREATY AND THE USSR'S MILITARY ACTION AGAINST POLAND.

4. ALTHOUGH HE SAID HE IS "POSITIVE" THAT SOVIET "PRE-SURE" WAS BEHIND ENEYETULLAH'S ARREST, ATIQUL ALAM TOLD THE POST INFORMATION OFFICER THAT HE DOES NOT THINK HIS ARTICLE WAS DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE. PRESSED TO EXPLAIN HIS VIEW OF SOVIET INVOLVEMENT, ALAM CITED "HIGH POLICE OFFICIALS" WITH WHOM HE TALKED AFTER ENEYDVULLAH WAS ARRESTED. ALAM SAID THAT HE HAS BEEN CONGRATULATED ON HIS ARTICLE BY MANY BANGALEES, INCLUDING COMMERCE MINISTER KHONDOKAR MUSHTAQUE AHMED WHO TOLD HIM HE HAD DONE A "GOOD JOB." THE ONLY CRITICISM CAME FROM AGRICULTURAL MINISTER ABDUS SAMAD WHO TELEPHONED ALAM TO TELL HIM THAT HE HAD DONE "POSITIVE HARM" TO THE GOVERNMENT BY OFFENDING THE SOVIETS. REFUSING TO ACCEPT ALAM'S ARGUMENT THAT HE WAS MERELY SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT, SAMAD SAID THAT THE SOVIETS COULD NOT BE TREATED THAT WAY SINCE THEY HAD HELPED TO LIBERATE

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BANGLADESH. NO ACTION HAS BEEN TAKEN AGAINST ALAM FOR HIS ARTICLE.

5. SPECULATION AS TO EXACT CAUSE OF THE DETENTION, HOWEVER, IS WIDE RANGING. SOME OBSERVERS HAVE POINTED OUT THAT PERHAPS THE BDG MAY ALSO BE K
HAPPY WITH HOLIDAYS'S
PUBLISHING LETTER MAY 11 FROM DISSIDENT SYLHETIS IN

LONDON ADVOCATING INDEPENDENCE FROM "BANGALEE COLONIAL
OPPRESSION." NOT LEAST IN THE PRESIDENT'S MOTIVA-
TION MAY BE FACT THAT SO FAR ENEYETULLAH HAS EQUIVOCATED
IN RESPONDING TO MUJIB'S OVERTURES THAT HE JOIN BAKSAL
AND BECOME A GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL. WHATEVER HOLIDAY'S
CONVOLUTED MARXIST INTERPRETATIONS OF EVENTS AND PENCHANT
FOR THE CONSPIRATORIAL VIEW OF THE WORLD, IT REMAINS ONE
OF THE FEW THOUGHT-PROVOKING JOURNALS IN BANGLADESH WITH
AN UNERRING INSTINCT FOR IDENTIFYING THE WEAKNESSES AND
PRETENSIONS OF THE RULING PARTY. WHILE FAR MORE
CAREFUL IN ITS PHRASING SINCE THE STATE OF EMERGENCY AND
MORE WILLING TO GIVE THE GOVERNMENT THE BENEFIT OF THE
DOUBT, IT HAS NOT CEASED ITS CRITICISMS. MUJIB MAY HAVE
DECIDED THAT ENEYETULLAH, AS WELL AS CRITICS IN GENERAL,
NEEDED TO BE REMINDED THAT THE SECOND REVOLUTION'S GOAL
OF NATIONAL UNITY, IN WHATEVER GUISE, IS TO BE TAKEN
SERIOUSLY.
BOSTER

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